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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to help high school students become more creative by encouraging them to be audacious, divergent thinkers capable of entertaining several contradictory ideas simultaneously. Tolerating paradox and ambiguity are vital components in developing creativity. These goals were achieved by developing a nurturing, caring, accepting atmosphere in the classroom, by celebrating differences, by encouraging eccentricity and diversity, by brainstorming, and by the teaching of peer evaluations. Students' work was evaluated in nontraditional ways. Instead of grading all work, portfolio assessment stressing processes as well as product, self-evaluation, and peer response/reaction were the evaluation tools. Students' perception of and definition of creativity deepened and expanded to include all human pursuits, not simply the arts. (Contains 34 references, and 1 table and 1 figure of data. Appendixes present survey instruments, rubrics, and data.) (Author/RS)

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ED 387 788

Developing High School Students' Creativity by Teaching Them to Take Risks and Defer Judgment

by

Elfie Israel

Cluster 60

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1995

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Amalia Zagami

Amalia Zagami

Assistant Principal

Title

3600 College Ave., Davie, FL 33314

Address

8/9/95

Date

This practicum report was submitted by Elfie Israel under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Aug. 30, 1995

Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. J. Anderson

William Anderson, Ed.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Developing High School Students' Creativity by Teaching Them to Take Risks and Defer Judgment. Elfie Israel, 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Creativity/Risk Taking/Defer Judgment/Peer Evaluations/Cooperative Learning Groups/Mentoring/Portfolio Assessment

This practicum was designed to help high school students become more creative by encouraging them to be audacious, divergent thinkers capable of entertaining several contradictory ideas simultaneously. Tolerating paradox and ambiguity are vital components in developing creativity. These goals were achieved by developing a nurturing, caring, accepting atmosphere in the classroom, by celebrating differences, by encouraging eccentricity and diversity, by brainstorming, and by the teaching of peer evaluations. Students' perception of and definition of creativity deepened and expanded to include all human pursuits, not simply the arts. Their work was evaluated in nontraditional ways. Instead of grading all work, portfolio assessment stressing process as well as product, self-evaluation, and peer response/reaction were the evaluation tools.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer's county is an ever-expanding metropolitan community with over 1.2 million residents. During the past decade its population has increased by 23.3%. Its school district is the sixth largest fully-accredited school district in the United States.

The writer's high school is part of a complex which includes two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. There is a direct feeder pattern between the elementary, middle, and high schools in the complex. Created 27 years ago as a research and development center, the four schools have no boundary restrictions, and all who wish to attend must apply to the county for permission. Children who live in the adjoining area do not attend unless they apply and are accepted. All students are provided with bus transportation. At one time students needed to take a test to be admitted; this is no longer true. The admission guidelines are: (a) 35% of the student body must be black to reflect the demographics of the county; (b) no school district may be represented by more than 5% of its student population unless it is overcrowded; (c) students who are in the feeder school of the complex are automatically accepted

into the next level; and (d) an attempt is made to have the student population be 50% female and 50% male. The schools proportionately reflect the racial and cultural composition of Broward County.

The complex also houses the largest multicultural program in the county, serving students who speak more than 29 languages. For the past few years there has been a special program for recent high school immigrant children. Bused in from all over the county, they have remained together most of the day, attending classes with specially trained teachers and learning the language. Because every effort is made to integrate the students into the school as quickly as possible, many of these youngsters are now being infused into regular classes before attaining the necessary skills.

Many staff members have been associated with the school from its beginnings and are almost ready to retire. Their memories, their experiences, and their needs sometimes make innovation difficult, yet this school is more innovative and risk-taking than most others because it has to be in order to justify its existence.

Students are enrolled for a variety of reasons. Many attend because of the school's reputation and past history. Others do so because their parents are high achievers with high expectations. Still others attend because the hours are convenient. Because of busing, the school day begins

later and ends later than any of the schools in the county. Children are therefore often not left unattended at home since many come home when their parents do. Several special programs, including a very exclusive one in math which has just been eliminated, also drew students to the school.

There is almost no communication among the four schools within this complex. To rectify this situation, teachers banded together, applied for, and obtained a $250,000 grant to create an innovation zone. The purpose of this zone is to eliminate tracking and enable students to take courses on whatever level they are qualified. The grant also calls for including the neighboring community college and university in this plan. The first year of the grant is to be devoted to planning; the next two should include implementation. The school is near the end of its planning phase and should be implementing curriculum changes in another 8 months.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is an English teacher in the high school who has taught at several public and private middle schools abroad and high schools abroad and in the states before working at this one. The writer's desire to work at this school was sparked by knowledge that it had become affiliated with Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition's philosophy includes the notion that one is constantly learning and changing. Closely aligned with this is the concept that risk taking benefits

students. Equally attractive are the Coalition principles that students should be workers, less is more, and that individualization and small classes are goals toward which one should strive. Both in the Bahamas and at a private school in the states the writer observed bused students who strongly identified with their schools and whose loyalties were fairly strong, attitudes sadly missing at the present worksite.

The writer's training also includes having been awarded scholarships by the National Endowment for the Humanities for five years. During those summers she was able to immerse herself in learning more in her field and in speaking with teachers and professors from all over the country, comparing notes on student expectations and performances. She has a Master's degree and had accumulated 40 graduate credits, mainly in English, before embarking upon the doctoral program. She has had articles published in national, state, and local teaching journals.

In addition, as an editor of her state's English Journal the writer corresponds with many of her colleagues and is cognizant of what happens elsewhere in the state. She is also a reader for the refereed journal of the national English Journal, thereby being privy to the latest research findings, current classroom practices that work, and anecdotal material. Last summer she became one of 12 national winners of a competition by The Center on Learning,

Assessment and School Structure for designing an exemplary unit on Beloved; they will be anthologizing it this year.

As advisor of her school's literary magazine, she is acquainted with student performance, attitude, and aptitude not only in her classes, but throughout the school. She also is the advisor of a weekly newsletter, one side of which is devoted to creative writing by the entire student body. From her student editors, from conversations with colleagues, from articles read, and from personal experience, she realizes that creativity is treated much the same as are classics: everyone lauds it, but no-one teaches it. There is no time. It is difficult to grade. It is important, but she must cover material in the county guidelines. In addition, the writer's county, to preserve the seventh period--the sacrosanct electives--has cut one period a week from all courses. In essence, teachers have 6 weeks less to cover the same material. If they felt they had little time for creativity before, they surely feel they have none now.

The writer is licensed to teach English, social studies, and the gifted. Her current teaching assignment consists of three classes of Advanced Placement English and two classes of creative writing. The Advanced Placement students are all college bound; their SAT verbal scores range from 350 to 720. Their writing abilities also vary. The two creative writing classes have a heterogenous makeup:

10th, 11th, and 12th graders with a wide range of talent, IQs which range from 90 to 180, and SAT verbal scores 250-750. This is an elective course and students take it for a variety of reasons, ranging from an interest in writing to conflicts with other courses to a desire to have some involvement with a school publication.

The writer is the faculty advisor to the school's literary magazine which is published annually and to a weekly newsletter which she began at the end of last year, half of which is devoted to the creative works of students. She is also in charge of all English competitions and contests. She has just helped interested students form an English Honor Society in her school; its focus is promoting the arts and providing service to the community in areas related to English. The writer represents her department on the shared decision making team at school. During the past year she has been an active member of the curriculum committee of the four school complex, redefining the goals, and beginning to rewrite the curriculum for grades K-post high school graduate.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem at the writer's school was not unique and existed in schools throughout the land: students were not creative. They did not take risks or defer judgment. They were more concerned in pleasing the teacher than in breaking any molds or in experimenting. They lacked courage and belief in themselves and in the value of their ideas. These were the aspects of creativity with which the practicum dealt. Students were learning by rote and eschewed original thinking. Memorization was highly valued. Yet the purpose of schooling was to help students develop the tools whereby they could become better thinkers and decision makers, as well as more responsible citizens. To do this required brainstorming, thinking and not reacting, deferring judgments, taking risks, trusting oneself, prioritizing, and being self-starters. Students were reluctant to perform these operations, preferring to be told what to do and how to do it. High school English classes at the writer's school taught the research paper for 9 weeks every year for 4 years. The emphasis was on learning what others said about literature; little value was placed on students' evaluation, on students' analysis, on students pursuing

their own thoughts and expressing themselves outside the mold of the research paper. Students needed to learn how to tolerate paradox, deal with open-ended questions, try new modes of expression because the medium is the message, experiment and be willing to reach dead end and then turn in a new direction, and to be confident enough to believe in their own thoughts.

Problem Documentation

There was much empirical evidence that this problem existed. Students required very specific instructions when given any creative assignment. The author gave 60 students an open-ended creative assignment: react creatively to an assigned summer reading book. Fifty-three of them asked for more details. Thirty-seven sought the instructor's approval before beginning to work on their projects. The author then devised a list of possible choices, "other" being one of the categories. Only two opted for that one. A third student took a risk and made a T-shirt based on a pun. All the others took one of the suggestions generated by the author. This behavioral pattern has been noticed by the author throughout the 10 years she has taught at this school.

On another occasion, the author asked 75 students to write college essays. Seventy-one selected safe subjects; four took risks either in form or content or both. One who did so was chastised by his peers during peer review. Five students then received applications from one university

which had very creative, non-directive essays. Two have decided not to apply, fearful of this. The others were uncertain; they feared this daunting task.

On numerous occasions teachers have complained that students will not think, will not experiment, and need to be told what to do and how to do it. They have not been encouraged to experiment, to consider the bright side of failure - that one could try a new approach and learn from what has not worked. They did not differentiate between failure and the reaching of a dead end and starting in another direction.

When queried, only two of the 16 English teachers said they gave their students creative assignments with few, if any, guidelines. Students reported being penalized when they responded to an essay in a creative way. Gifted students cited their teacher's demand that they use the sacrosanct five-paragraph essay form when they wrote.

The writer has spoken to teachers at her school and at other schools in her area and voiced concern over state mandates concerning writing. Because their students now have to produce a writing sample that will be graded on a state level, they all concluded that they would stop whatever little creative writing they had been doing so that they could prepare their students for this test. Teachers also equated creativity with frivolity and did not believe that by stressing it their students would become better

writers. Teachers truly believed that expository writing required totally different skills from those valued in creative writing. They were genuinely surprised when they had students who excelled in both. Teachers also believed that they had to teach persuasive writing techniques within the context of a five-paragraph essay. They argued that it was good for students to master a form upon which they could fall back. They did not see it as a sterile, false, non-relevant and phony form which lulled them and their students into a false security and encouraged a dearth of ideas. Nor did they realize its crippling effects. The joy in experimentation was killed before ever blossoming.

Students needed to learn how to distinguish between taking risks and exhibiting good taste. They did not necessarily distinguish between the two because they did not know the difference. Since the writer returned to the states and began teaching high school, she has had a few students every year who have pushed the limits of what is permissible. However, they failed to distinguish between good taste and bad, thinking that simply using vulgarity is daring and innovative. It is not. This practicum hoped to help them learn when obscenity is simply obscenity. Students learned to take appropriate risks within the bounds of good taste. Some students equated creativity with "curse words," "bad grammar," or the inclusion of inappropriate material. They did not distinguish between what is truly

original and in good taste and what is imitative, pornographic, and in bad taste. Never given any freedom, they could at first become wild. This was the starting point for the development of criteria for evaluating quality in the creative product. It was a vital component of prioritization.

Brainstorming, asking open-ended questions, encouraging divergent thinking, deferring judgments, and then teaching prioritization were all important teaching skills which students needed to practice often in the classroom. However, the writer has spoken to several recent college graduates who majored in education. Initially, they did not consider questioning skills, the hierarchy of questions, or brainstorming to be important. They stated this was mainly because their education professors spent only one day on these vital classroom skills and gave them little practice in using them. It would seem that universities are placing too little emphasis on the process which makes creativity possible.

The writer asked her students to write about evil. They wanted to know what form to use, what she wanted to know, how to do it. Later, in a discussion, she asked them to consider who was more evil, Othello or Iago. Many agreed with one student who voiced her concern over this question. She did not think she should even think about it for she felt she could not determine that. Speculation was out of

the question for her and her peers. The writer has, on many occasions, found students reluctant to prioritize issues, to list them in importance. This moral relativity was unrelated to their ability to quickly decide that a character is psychotic or weird - because she was different.

A teacher survey reported that 14 out of 16 felt that creativity was important, but they also reported that they did not encourage it. Twelve out of the 16 specifically instructed their students not to be creative when writing essays. Although teachers agreed that, in theory, creativity is important, students did not concur. In a survey of 250 students, 20% considered the development of thinking skills and/or creativity to be the purpose of education. Eighty percent listed learning information or acquiring technological skills which were marketable and useful in the work place to be the purpose of education.

Teachers and students reported that there was great reluctance to submit pieces to the school's literary magazine. Out of 300 submissions, only 50 were unsolicited. Art work was all commissioned; there were no submissions for the cover and only eight unsolicited submissions. The author edited a state teachers' magazine which publishes student art and poems. Not one student submitted work to it without being specifically asked or assigned. The school's weekly newsletter, with its page of creative writing, had

similar difficulties. The student editor reported that she cajoled, begged, and pleaded for submissions.

The author has observed that her most creative students sometimes had the greatest difficulty taking multiple choice tests. She advised them not to take risks or read too much into the question; they then did much better. On one occasion, the author gave the class a 40-question test on Hamlet written by the College Board. The students took it home and the next day reported that they had spent hours talking, arguing, and checking the test. There were at least seven questions which had two equally good answers.

Students laughed at peers who were different and discouraged others from asking unusual questions, from responding in different ways, or from taking risks. Those who wrote the most unusual responses were reluctant to voluntarily read them; it took training of the students to ensure that they did not laugh at these efforts. Teenage peer pressure is a well-known and well-documented phenomenon. Those who are different risk ostracism and ridicule.

The writer surveyed 250 students in grades 9-12. Eighty percent of them thought that creativity was important; 20% did not. What was disturbing was that 40% claimed that they were never encouraged or even allowed to be creative; 45% felt that occasionally they were creative; and 15% said that they were frequently asked to be creative.

This is even more disturbing since the author teaches at a school which is designed as a research and development center.

Although most of the writer's students have been taught brainstorming and outlining skills, she has observed that, unless they are specifically required to do so, only 7 out of the 60 do any brainstorming. This technique is most important in developing the creative tools of taking risks and deferring judgment. None of the writer's students had been taught a unit on creativity in the public schools or had been exposed to any of the units developed by de Bono (1986), Parnes (1967), or others. The school ordered de Bono's CORT program 3 years ago; however, only the writer has ever used it. No-one has used his creativity unit.

Students' views of creativity were more narrow than those of the writer. She has attempted, without success, to have her literary magazine editors include products other than art or writing. They have consistently balked at the suggestion to use musical compositions, fashion designs, architectural drawings, or other forms.

Students rarely went beyond the rules or beyond the form in writing. Few would ever take poetic license. Even fewer invented words or forms for poetry. Until given permission by teachers and exposed to free verse, most wrote in a sing-song, rhymed style. For the past 8 years the author has submitted annually the work of three students to

the National Council of Teachers of English writing competition. Only once did a student react in a totally bizarre, experimental storytelling mode to the question posed. All the others felt they needed to respond with a neat essay.

Even those students who are creative usually are limited in scope, responding in a predictable form. Those who are humorous almost always respond with humor; those who are poets almost always write poems; artists almost always draw. Rarely did they attempt a new medium when given an open-ended assignment. Thus they never tried a mode of expression they had not tried before.

Causative Analysis

There were many causes for the prevailing conditions. Teachers were surely somewhat responsible. They had discouraged students from trying, from experimenting, and from taking risks. Many seemed to teach by rote, reward formulaic responses, and disapproved of any experimentation or risk taking. Asking questions that stressed convergent thinking exacerbated the situation.

Teachers often accepted outlines that were obviously written after the paper was written. The outlines were not performing their intent--to get students to think about the problem. When the writer demanded that students show their outlines before they wrote the papers underneath them, they became perplexed and upset.

College bound students believed that high grades were absolutely vital for college acceptance. Their parents did not consider them average and insisted on A's; maybe, in an emergency, B's. With parents and students both desiring high grades at any price, the emphasis was on getting the questions right, not being wrong, not experimenting, not taking risks. They did not see that being wrong could be positive, leading one to other and even better solutions.

Teachers insisted upon grading every piece of paper they ever met, claiming that students wanted them to do so. Uncomfortable with grading creative writing, probably because they had not been trained in how to do it, they found it easier to assign only expository pieces. They were also concerned about meeting county and state guidelines in writing. It was difficult to set up rubrics for assessing creative work. It also required much work if one permitted rewrites. Fear of being questioned, of being sued, of being challenged, all conspired to make multiple choice testing the exam of choice. Larger and larger classes demanded this.

Moreover, while many teachers verbalized their belief that every person is creative; most did not really believe that. They were unwilling to penalize the many students perceived by them as being uncreative. They really were not comfortable defining and recognizing creativity; they were untrained in how to develop or nurture it.

Creativity is not highly regarded in this society. Sequels and prequels abound since they follow a tried and proven formula. True artists are rarely recognized in their lifetime. Writers and artists have great difficulty supporting themselves comfortably. Most parents blanched when their children expressed a desire to pursue creative avenues. Most of the writer's students felt great pressure from loved ones to decide upon careers now and considered college a place to hone marketable skills, not to explore and dream.

Teachers have not been trained to see the importance of incorporating creativity into their work. College education courses and teacher training courses did not stress this. Textbooks, which form the basis for the curriculum in many schools, ignored it. High schools, with their concerns for getting through the curriculum, covering the subject matter, and meeting state and county guidelines, ignored it.

Creativity causes anxiety, work, and tension because it is not easy. It requires a great deal of work and training. It forces teachers to do more than just lecture and students to do more than just be stenographers. Neither is willing to break with the past and undertake new roles.

Teenagers can be very conservative, preferring what they know and are comfortable with to a totally new approach. When several of the author's classes finished reading Julius Caesar, they saw Marlon Brando's performance

and liked it. They were then taken to see a production which set the play in the 20th century South America. They did not like it; it was too daring an interpretation. Most, having only been exposed to representational art, disliked modern art at first. Most students were well versed in rhyme; at first they eschewed and disliked free verse.

This nation seems to espouse a new educational cause every few years. Creativity is no longer new or attractive. Therefore, it is seldom stressed. Few creativity workshops are available; those that do exist are very expensive. Thus teachers are really not being trained.

The plethora of material related to this issue indicated to the writer that there is grave concern over the lack of emphasis on creativity in our high schools. There are a variety of thinking courses and creative idea books designed to train students in this area. However, as previously mentioned, these are expensive. Many are written for elementary school children; far fewer are for high school students. With departmentalization in the high school, the concern over one's own turf and covering the curriculum, few teachers find them useful. But 10 years after Sputnik nudged educators to re-examine their goals, new priorities have arisen and creativity is the fading, not the rising, star in the constellation.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Many writers assume that elementary school teachers will infuse these ideas into the curriculum. This may be true with small children, but it certainly is not happening in the high schools. Studies indicated that this may not be the best way for creativity to be taught. Torrance's (1972) study indicated that when creativity was taught separately, there was a greater and longer lasting gain by the subjects. Ninety percent increased their skills after taking a specific course as compared with 51% who did so when creativity was not taught separately.

Many writers documented and provided evidence that this problem exists. Torrance (1992) stated that his research indicated that although some creative values are still esteemed, risk taking is not one of them, nor is independent thinking - which involves deferring judgment. Nor is there any evidence that students are taught to then prioritize and determine what aspects of a problem or solution are important, which are not vital. Neither are they encouraged to value their own ideas and to pursue their own thoughts.

Eberle (1971) confirmed the writer's observations that most teachers reward students for learning information, for not asking questions which are difficult or impossible to answer, and for remembering knowledge. The writer's Advanced Placement classes this year had been very quiet during Socratic seminar discussions. She had to wait more

than the proverbial 10 seconds for a response to open-ended questions. Upon investigation she discovered that by the sixth week of classes she had done more in the way of class discussions than had previous year's teachers during 9 months. Students were used to questions which they knew the answers would be right or wrong; they were unnerved by questions which required speculation and thought and risk.

Torrance (1964) indicated that creative students are seen by their teachers as being "less desirable as pupils, more difficult to get to know, more playful, and less ambitious" (p. 131). Teachers view these attributes negatively. They can disturb a class. They make crowd control difficult. They make others uncomfortable. Thus creativity is not nourished or encouraged. Numerous studies (Getzels & Jackson, 1959; Taylor, 1964) showed that teachers do not like creative students, feeling threatened and intimidated by them or unhappy with the disturbance creativity creates in a well-ordered, structured classroom. Students quickly pick up on this and their creativity is successfully stifled.

Peer pressure is a very powerful force; most people are susceptible to it. Even though many creative people claim they ignore what others think, they must be affected when they are shunned, ridiculed, or their ideas ignored. Torrance (1963) wrote that "the tendency of organizations to

control the most creative tends to coerce some highly creative children to reduce severely their usefulness" (p. 130). By fifth grade they have learned that often the group will ignore their suggestions; hence they prefer working alone.

Professionals in the field see many causes for this problem. Corino (1984) stressed the culpability of the writing test in destroying creativity. This is especially true, says he, under timed testing conditions. To insist that students form an opinion and write a well-organized paper with appropriate support within a specified period of time is the antithesis of brainstorming, of speculation, of thinking. The very term essayer from the French (and rooted in Montaigne's writings) means to try. The timed essay does not invite speculation; it demands opinionated writing.

Torrance (1992) pointed out that there no longer is money available for developing creativity. The sources of revenue for research, for teacher development, for retraining, and/or reinforcement have dried up. There are sexier projects out there which are new and different and more attractive.

Toynbee (1964) was concerned that society was wasting its creative potential because it placed so little value on creativity. American democracy, he stated, was made possible because the founding fathers were creative; its existence is threatened if this force is discouraged.

Many teachers still rely on the five-paragraph essay with a thesis statement that has three prongs. This teaches children an untruth since there are very few, if any, professional essays written in this way. Why teach it? Because it is easy to do so; it numbs the mind and the creativity (Corino, 1984), but it is easy to grade. Students learn to use this formulaic approach since they do want to please the teacher.

Creative children use first person in their writing claimed Torrance (1963). Yet this is almost always frowned upon and criticized by most teachers. Almost every one of the writer's students tells her, at the beginning of each year, that the use of personal pronouns had been prohibited by their former teachers. Many colleagues at other schools in her area confirm this. Teachers seem to have so little confidence in the students' ability to judge when it is appropriate to do so, and when it would be intrusive, that they prefer to outlaw its use. Unwittingly, teachers are destroying the tender seeds of creativity.

Torrance (1963) sent a questionnaire to teachers, asking them to list their subject and three objectives. Seventy percent listed cognition--learning about and recognizing the subject--as their objectives; 20% had behavioral objectives. Only a small percentage of the remaining ones considered thinking or creativity important. Obviously, if they don't value it, they don't encourage or

teach it. Their activities, assignments, and tests corroborate their lack of concern for these qualities.

Torrance (1963) argued that parents think they want their children to be creative, but their actions belie this. Most adults (and unfortunately this includes most teachers) dislike being asked questions they can't answer, feel it incumbent to be bosses and authoritarian, and do not want others to think their children strange or different. They have little tolerance for paradox, which is a key element in creativity.

Guilford (cited in Getzels & Jackson, 1959) indicated that schools emphasize convergent rather than divergent thinking, thereby hindering creativity. As mentioned previously, convergent thinking is rote memory, it is easy to grade, and it is inimical to creativity. Some information and knowledge are needed, but to laud only what was and to ignore what can be is the very antithesis of imagination. Guilford then stated, it is tragic that "divergent fantasy is called 'rebellious' rather than germinal; unconventional career choice is called 'unrealistic' rather than courageous" (p. 57). Duck (1985) agreed, claiming that the teaching style in the United States is based on convergent thinking, "lulling students into the security of successful searches" (p. 131), which discourages higher order thinking.

There seems to be a resurgence of interest in Torrance's Future Problem Solving Project; one issue (Flack, 1991) of Gifted Child Today was devoted to its participants' reactions to it 10 years after its inception. The writer knows of no high school in her district which has used or modified this project, although many elementary gifted programs were involved in it. Carroll (1991) pointed out that the program trains and develops leaders in all fields. She stated that it "empowers students to be change agents" (p. 8) who affect all areas of human endeavor. Not only do they, because of their training in risk taking and brainstorming, become better thinkers; they also affect the world by becoming better citizens. Hibel (1991) contended that he has become a professional problem solver because of specific techniques learned in school. He believed the thinking style encouraged by the Future Problem Solving Project imbued him with universal skills which can be used in any profession. Shewach (1991) concurred and pointed out that creativity enabled her to adapt to the future as well as to hone skills useful in her life. Torrance (1964) reported that many creative students select occupations which are unusual.

The benefits of creativity training to the individual, his society, and the world are manifold. Torrance (1963) cited four good reasons to encourage creativity: (a) one's mental health; (b) to become a "fully functioning person"

(p. 45); (c) for worldly success; and (d) the success of a democracy depends upon creative solutions to problems. Olsen (1952) considered creativity "a natural resource" (p. 11) which must be conserved. Flack (1991) agreed, crediting the future problem-solving program with benefits to the world (as well as personal ones). He claimed that through brainstorming youngsters learn that the world's problems can be solved; all is not hopeless and humans are not helpless.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The writer hoped to tap into the creative potential of her students by creating a classroom environment that would encourage them to take risks, defer judgment, tolerate paradox, generate and explore many possibilities and then prioritize these, believe and have courage to value their own ideas, and be willing to experiment, reach a dead end, and then start in a new direction. The writer's expected outcomes were that her students would become more willing to take risks and in doing so would defer making judgments. This would be evidenced in their writing, in any projects they undertook, and in their ability to communicate with their peers and with younger students.

Expected Outcomes

Outcome 1

At the end of the practicum, 35 out of 50 students enrolled in the writer's creative writing classes will view themselves as risk takers and will supply the writer with concrete evidence of this. Students, after defining

creativity in broader terms, will be able to react to a short story in a variety of different expressive modes. They will give evidence of having experimented with different forms of creativity. If the medium is the message, this would surely indicate that they have become more creative. They will see themselves as risk takers and be able to point out when, where, and how they chose to take risks. If they chose not to do so, they would have good, intellectual reasons for doing so, not the fear of failure, the fear of ridicule, or the fear of a low grade.

Outcome 2

When given brainstorming activities involving unusual uses or the clustering of ideas around a word or phrase, 35 out of 50 will show an increase in the number of items generated. They will show evidence of ideas leading to other ideas and then branching off into others. This will indicate that they had deferred judgment while engaged in brainstorming. They will then be able to prioritize the items by criteria they established.

Outcome 3

Students will be given a theme, a plot, a story, and 40 out of 50 will be able to rewrite it in an original and unusual way. They will be able to adapt it to their audience, and yet develop unusual ways of delivering and reinforcing the project. This will indicate their ability

to take risks, to experiment, to generate new strategies, and to have an increased belief in the value of their own ideas.

Measurement of Outcomes

Students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix A) concerning creativity to ascertain their attitude towards it, how they defined it, what they considered to be creative endeavors, and if and how they were creative. They were asked for evidence (if there was any) of risk taking. The writer also engaged in several classroom activities involving risk taking. In addition to self-evaluation and teacher observation, students were required to maintain weekly logs and journals which indicated specifically what creative work they had done and how they felt about it. They were also trained in cooperative group techniques and in peer editing. Students also engaged in seminar discussions, recorded their brainstorming ideas, wrote journal entries, shared with different classes, and performed skits and myriad other creative tasks and activities. Students were encouraged to enter writing contests and competitions and to submit works for publication in both the school and in national magazines. Entries in competitions and contests were tabulated.

Students kept folders of their work and also wrote journal entries reacting to their work, revising when and if they thought this necessary. The writer believes that self-

knowledge is an important element in this process and trained her students to be aware of what they were and were not doing. They also exchanged folders and journals with their peers, reacting to one another's writings and comments on the writing. They learned to talk about thinking.

Outcome 1 was measured by an analysis of students' work as well as their journals in which they fully discussed the process, their progress, and their results. Students rated themselves. Their peers, working in cooperative groups, also rated them, as did the writer. Students were encouraged to question one another and to discuss their reactions within the group and with the class before turning in their written evaluations. Students needed to cite specific places in the text where the differences in expressive mode occurred. If there were none, this needed to be explained. They also speculated on their own risk taking, or lack thereof.

Outcome 2 was measured by counting and comparing items in students' clusters at the beginning and at the end of the practicum. Having kept weekly logs, students were able to discern differences in quantity as the weeks progressed. Myers and Torrance (1965), as well as de Bono (1986) and Rico (1987) adamantly insisted that this is an accurate measure of progress. Since the goal was to defer judgment, no value was placed on the quality of the responses.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The literature read indicated that there are some excellent courses in developing creativity. Parnes (1967) wrote the curriculum for a semester course which stressed taking risks and brainstorming. Because his audience was older than the writer's and enrolled in a course called creativity, the writer felt she did not have the time nor the mandate to incorporate his specific lessons into her curriculum.

De Bono, on the other hand, wrote a six-part thinking course, one of whose components was creativity. The writer's students partook in the entire 10-week program. The exercises included risk taking, experimenting, deferring judgment, and constant brainstorming. De Bono's emphasis was on generating lists first and then prioritizing them. Only at the end of the 10-week cycle did he introduce evaluation. The writer found this approach and his course quite useful, despite the occasional lamentations of her students who ached for total freedom and at first resisted thinking by writing lists.

Rico's (1987) Writing the Natural Way is a multiweek course in brainstorming. It dovetailed well with this

writer's needs and purposes since its primary aim was writing vignettes after brainstorming. Her students needed to be taught how to cluster, a far superior skill to outlining since all ideas appear to be equal and are not prioritized or developed until after completing the clusters. The students were surprised at their initial dearth of ideas. Because they were constantly reminded and encouraged to take risks and to tolerate ambiguity and paradox, their lists became longer and more diversified and interesting.

Leary's (1964) suggestion that role playing increases creativity was excellent. This technique has worked in helping students unlock meaning from text (Israel, 1993) and as an alternative to multiple choice testing. The writer agrees with him that adverse learning conditions decrease creativity; favorable learning conditions increase creativity. Karioth (1970) confirmed these findings, stating that dramatics are an excellent tool for improving creativity with youngsters in fifth grade and above. Clements, Dwinell, Torrance, and Kidd (1982) concluded that students involved in dramatics score significantly higher on creativity tests. The writer therefore encouraged increased student experiences in this area. The results affirmed their findings.

The writer incorporated many warm-up activities in her classes, following Torrance's (1963) advice that these

improve creativity. She also chose not to grade the students' work in an orthodox fashion. Wiggins (1992) and Sizer (1984) are but a few contemporary educators who believe that growth is more discernible when one looks at the process as well as at many products and not be limited to one. However, this form of evaluation is very time consuming and requires much dialogue between students and teacher. Clarity, consistency, maintenance of high standards, and trust are vital components. This policy was partially successful. The writer had some students whose performances were exceptional because they were perfectionists or people unsatisfied with anything less than the best. There were also some who were unmotivated whether or not they were graded. The majority seemed to blossom when their experimentations and their "failures" were commended and not penalized. They were taught to regard failure as a starting point to another idea and not as an end.

Torrance (1981) credited certain teaching styles with being successful. These included brainstorming, encouraging participation, accepting students' responses, asking many questions, and avoiding judgments. Coleman, Kaufman, and Ray (1992) cited the absence of judgment and the asking of penetrating questions as being two of the four "most powerful tools" (p. 65) in developing one's creativity. Parnes (1967) stated that imagination is released if the

instructor convinces the students to defer judgment until many alternatives are listed. Gowan (1978) suggested the use of transcendental meditation in decreasing anxiety and thereby unlocking creativity. The writer totally agrees with these theorists and theories. She feels that the classroom atmosphere and the sense of trust and nurturing pervading it are the key factors in developing creativity. Her students cited the same points when they evaluated the course.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer incorporated many of the above ideas into her creative writing course. She extended the definition of creativity to include all of the arts as well as science. Students wrote, drew, sketched, performed, danced, and sang. They realized that creativity was a much broader concept than they had initially envisioned and tapped into their own hidden wells of originality.

The trip to a local museum's special exhibit of American historical paintings taught the students how different periods of time viewed events from totally contradictory perspectives. Earlier paintings depicted the American Indian as a savage; later ones extolled his virtues. This validated the notion that interpretations are subjective, can be contradictory, and are valued for their beauty. There are many issues which preclude a correct answer. The writer also presented a slide show. Students

were then asked to react to the word "scream" and to the phrase "a nude descending the staircase." Comparing their artistic endeavors with those of Munch's painting, "The Scream," and Deschamps' revolutionary abstract, "Nude Descending a Staircase," reiterated the idea of divergent thinking.

Guest speakers discussed creativity with the students in the class. Each student was responsible for bringing in a person to talk about this subject, helping expand the students' definition and understanding of the term creativity and of its process. Beverly Coyle, Vassar professor and author of The Kneeling Bus and In Troubled Water, spent an hour with many of them discussing the craft of writing.

Relaxation exercises to relieve stress were essential. Frequent brain breaks to alleviate tension included brief exercises and deep breathing. An occasional jumping jack pumped the heart and the mind.

The writer incorporated some of von Oech's (1983) ideas into her weekly plans. He had suggested frequent practice with metaphors, the illogical, and the experimental. The writer inundated her students with puzzles, questions, and riddles, and all forms of open-ended activities to stimulate their creativity. Time was limited for this tactic, which was unfortunate since the students enjoyed this and found it

an effective catalyst for divergent thinking and risk taking.

The writer used grades minimally. As long as the students did the work promptly, handed it in on assigned dates, and applied themselves, they received full credit for it. Work was revised and redone if and when evaluations by peers or teacher required it, and there were no penalties. Certain projects carried extra weight and, to earn an A, students had to complete six of them per semester. These included providing speakers on creativity, attending cultural functions, attending one or two field trips, and working with a younger child on a book. Since grades frequently inhibit risk taking, removal of that threat made the prospect of taking chances more attractive. However, grades are also, for some, an incentive to exert special effort, and occasionally this led to a diminished effort.

Working in cooperative groups, the creative writing classes generated ideas using de Bono's (1986) CORT creativity series. Emphasis was on maximizing the number of ideas without judging them. Skills included unusual combinations, unusual uses, defining the problem and, at the very end of the course's 10 weeks, evaluating and prioritizing. At times students found de Bono's approach onerous. After the first few sessions, it might have been better to work on it every other week.

Using Rico's (1987) tape on brainstorming, students learned to cluster as many ideas as possible around a word and only then prioritize and develop one of them. They wrote excellent vignettes using this technique. Clustering encouraged them to be more tolerant of ambiguity and to tap into their imaginations.

Students engaged in innumerable open-ended discussions, rewrote the endings to many novels, and reacted creatively as frequently as possible. The class atmosphere was accepting and warm and trust building activities continued throughout the year. In addition, dramatics was an integral part of the class. Sometimes unaccustomed roles were assigned: thespians wrote, writers drew, and artists acted. In a spirit of acceptance and affirmation, this encouraged divergent thinking, role playing, deferment of judgment, and risk taking. As a result, students were better able to tolerate multiple interpretations. The students wrote less frequently than in past years, but the role playing helped them defer judgment.

As faculty advisor to the magazine and weekly newsletter, students were encouraged to enter pieces in these publications and to submit work to county, state, and national competitions. Some of the contest topics were assigned to the entire group, but the option of entering the contest was always left to the student. Students were also

encouraged to submit art and poetry to the state's journal for English teachers.

Adopting an elementary school student as a protege/ buddy was possible in only one of the two classes because of scheduling problems. This turned out to be a new experience fraught with fear for many. Their worries included wondering if they would be liked, if their younger partners would be happy to see them, and if that youngster would like the book they designed and wrote. When the class evaluated the books, they realized how truly divergent their thinking had become. One student used simple language so her buddy could understand her book; another student incorporated difficult vocabulary so his student would learn new words. What one saw as an asset was considered a deficit by another--and both were right. Students were learning to tolerate ambiguity.

Students were informed of the writer's goal in this practicum. The writer felt this to be a moral imperative because of the radical changes she was making to the course. She also shared with her students her rationale for curricula changes and the importance she placed on risk taking and deferring judgment. She assured them that she, too, would serve as a role model. She also needed to explain that grading would be different from the way it had been done previously; this was a risk she was prepared to take. Students would be rewarded for what they did; it was

mandatory that they meet deadlines and complete all of the assignments. Because this is an elective course and does not fulfill any graduation requirements, mutual trust and truth had to be established from the onset. Moreover, adolescents, she thinks, have the right to know what is expected of them. She also wanted input from her students, and this would be impossible if they were ignorant of her expectations. Furthermore, she concurs with Wiggins' (1992) belief that students should know in advance what is expected of them. The writer's sole modification of this idea was that initially she did not show them the actual rubric she planned to use to evaluate their risk taking and judgment deferment skills. (Ironically, she would have saved herself much grief had she done so; this is explained in chapter 5.) The writer also administered attitudinal surveys and gave the students topics upon which to write. She planned to compare these with comparable activities at the end of the year.

Report of Action Taken

Months 1 & 2

The writer taught her students certain cooperative learning strategies and techniques which had to be mastered. Students needed to learn mutual respect, they needed to know that all ideas and feelings expressed in class were confidential and not to be gossiped about outside the classroom, that no idea was to be considered weird or crazy,

that differences were to be celebrated, and they were to be truthful in their comments while avoiding personal attack or condemnation. De Bono's (1986) creativity course was then incorporated on a weekly basis. The writer shared her own apprehensions, pointing out that she was personally taking a risk since she had never taught this particular course, knew no-one who had done so, and was only minimally trained in it.

The students worked on one de Bono activity a week for 8 weeks, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups of two, and other times in groups of three or four. They were dismayed at the open-ended questions which disallowed right or wrong answers. They were unaccustomed to giving free rein to their flights of fancy and being rewarded for being silly. They found it difficult to accept ideas so different from their own and to be prohibited from criticizing, from judging, from labeling weird any unusual thoughts. After 8 weeks, the students begged for and were given several months respite before completing the de Bono course. The course required rigor that students did not usually associate with creativity, preferring to be illogical and chaotic rather than imaginative and orderly.

The writer's students read several stories by Vassar professor, Beverly Coyle. Ms. Coyle met with them, discussed creativity, and answered their questions. The students sent her creative thank you's and reacted to her

work in a variety of ways. They were intrigued by the literal meaning of her book's title, The Kneeling Bus.

The writer also began teaching brainstorming techniques, using Rico's (1987) tape. The students were taught the benefits of deferring judgment. At first, they were shown how to cluster one word and they shared these with their groups and then with the class. After a few lessons, they clustered, shared, and wrote vignettes. Several times they were required to revise and were urged to incorporate new techniques; write from a different point of view; write a play rather than a story; include dialogue; if in third person omniscient, try first person and vice versa; or if in free verse, try rhymed and vice versa. The attempt, the process, was rewarded, not the result.

The class went on a field trip to a local museum to view artistic interpretation of historical events. Four distinctly different schools of thought portrayed important highlights of American history. The students learned that artistic expression can be personal, varied, filled with paradox and contradiction, and either reflective of its time or in direct opposition to prevailing views. They paid to have a workshop augmenting their experience; unfortunately, this was canceled. They did have an additional serendipity: a four-piece musical concert by professional musicians exploring historical themes musically.

Months 3 & 4

Wishing to capitalize on the classes' realization that creativity came in many forms, the instructor had the students do photo essays. Their only guidelines were that a story be told solely through pictures, no words permitted, and that only seven photographs be used. Students were allowed to work in groups of two and were given class time to take pictures and to put the projects together. They were shared with the class.

Students, in groups of two, taught a literary term to their peers. They were given a list of such terms and signed up for the word of their choice. Some selected words they knew, others took the challenge of choosing words they were unsure of or wanted to understand better. A rubric of expectations was developed with the class for this project (see Appendix B).

"The Parable of the Prodigal Son" was read and discussed. Students were then asked to write a modern version of this story and to enact it for their classmates. The instructor hoped to ascertain creativity by how freely they strayed from the original tale while preserving the theme or motif or meaning. Various improvisational skits had already been done by the students, so they trusted one another and were not intimidated by a lack of thespian skills.

Students had already begun to sign up for bringing in creative speakers. The instructor wanted to avoid having the entire last marking period for this activity so she mandated that ceratin students had to have a speaker by the fifth month of the practicum, others by the sixth, and the remainder by the seventh. This activity had almost no restrictions. The only requirements were that the speaker be creative and share that with the class for at least 10 minutes. The writer was surprised when several students were their own speakers, but this turned out to be a fortuitous gold mine. She was also pleased that many students brought in classmates; most had difficulty finding adults with time to spare. Activities were generated from the topics, occupations, and areas touched upon by the speakers. The students also, upon certain occasions, reacted viscerally to their experiences with the speakers.

Months 5 & 6

Students were required to attend several cultural events (theater, ballet, museum, school play, school band performance) and they shared their feelings and thoughts. The writer hoped that by requiring such attendance, students would experience a broad spectrum of creativity. They were also able to celebrate each other's successes, since several of them were active in school activities.

As a group, the writer took them to a special performance of Shakespeare's Tempest. They had been shown

the BBC cartoon of this play and were able to compare the two versions. Technical virtuosity as well as interpretation of the Bard's language and meaning were discussed. Students enacted their own skits on similar themes as those in the play.

The instructor had promised her class that she would be modeling behavior she expected, and she informed them of her risk-taking decision to teach pop-up techniques for books or cards. Given excellent handout material by one of her peers, she had each student take a worksheet illustrating a different technique and had them create a pop-up. Most had not done this before. After the initial shock ("arts and crafts in a high school class?"), they formed groups of two or worked individually and made pop-ups which were hung up on the wall. By now, comfortable with deviating from the rules, many followed the instructions but changed the text or picture from the illustrations on the worksheet. They did this without asking permission first. They sought to be unique and different and knew this was commendable.

The writer informed the students of a national poetry contest. Students were to write poems of 19 lines or less on any topic. They enjoyed the irony of a contest which bewailed the inordinate number of hours students spent watching television but whose second place prize was a television set. All of them happily wrote poems to submit.

Ten were selected by national contest judges for publication in an anthology.

Month 7 & 8

Students created original mother's and father's day cards, some of them incorporating pop-ups. They were assured that the cards did not have to be given to the parent to whom it was addressed. Most were relieved upon hearing this. The writer was pleased with her students' variety and diversity in card design and content.

One of the students in the class arranged to have a group write an original skit combining the theme of reading and literacy with a modern version of The Three Little Pigs. He then arranged to go to several classes in the elementary school and perform for them. The writer took this idea and incorporated it into her final. She had students who were taking the final (at her school, students with low attendance may waive up to four exams; many chose to waive her exam this year) do a similar assignment.

Students also wanted to become more involved in the literary magazine and its activities. Because the editors preferred working without a class, the instructor had her students become involved in another risk-taking activity: a school pizza party. This was an unanticipated project. The class brainstormed and came up with outstanding ideas. One was to have several bands that students play in outside of school perform gratis. The bands agreed. Then one of the

students volunteered to create a program which was beautiful. Other students suggested going to stores and asking for donations. Several donated canned goods and paper goods, thereby lowering the expense. The pizza company agreed to a low price, and the party was on. Students designed posters and sold tickets. Others volunteered to clean up and serve. The writer feels that this was a result of the practicum's emphasis on brainstorming, on listening to all ideas (even though they may seem to be outlandish at first), and to the risk taking she had been encouraging. It must be noted that occasionally fundraising and other activities related to the literary magazine encroached upon class time. The writer spent fewer moments than she would have liked individually conferring with her students.

The culminating activity, though, was the children's books that the students wrote for their buddies. Because one class met after the elementary school was dismissed, this project was somewhat different in the two classes. One class was able to meet with its elementary school counterparts weekly for 6 weeks. These students developed a mentor-mentee relationship, hampered only by a language barrier. The kindergarten children were mainly recent immigrants who spoke little English. The older students were encouraged to mingle with the younger ones and paired off with a buddy/protege. After returning to class, the

writer and students made whatever partnership adjustments were necessary. One student preferred working with a peer; a few were more comfortable with someone of the same sex; and three exchanged for personal reasons. During the remaining weekly encounters, students individually decided what they wanted to do with their buddies. Some drew, some played games, some began the children's books as a dual project.

Because the writer's other class met after elementary school was dismissed, her students wrote notes to a fourth grade elementary class, having decided they wanted older children who could respond in writing. They were able to exchange notes only twice, and they worked on their projects with no input from the younger children.

Both classes had peer review, evaluation, and discussion of the project before the books were distributed to the younger children. The students expressed delight with their own efforts and with those of their peers. They asked penetrating and provocative questions of one another, especially ones which involved choices made by the student authors.

The writer and her students spent several days in seminar discussing the year's work, what worked, and what needed to be changed. Students wrote reflective pieces, evaluated their folders, reread their logs and commented on

them, and discussed ways in which their creativity could be incorporated into other aspects of their lives.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The purpose of this practicum was to encourage creativity by teaching students to defer judgement and to take risks. The writer hoped to tap into the creative potential of her students by creating a classroom environment that would encourage them to take risks, defer judgment, tolerate paradox, generate and explore many possibilities and then prioritize these, believe and have courage to value their own ideas, and be willing to experiment, reach a dead end, and then start in a new direction. The writer's expected outcomes were that her students would become more willing to take risks and in doing so would defer making judgements. This would be evidenced in their writing and in their ability to communicate with their peers and with younger students.

Outcome 1

At the end of the practicum, 35 out of 50 viewed themselves as risk takers and supplied the writer with concrete evidence of this. One way the writer measured their success was by having them react creatively to a short story. They gave evidence of having experimented with

different forms of creativity. Since most writers agree that the medium can be the message, this moving from one medium to another indicated that they had become more creative. Students viewed themselves as risk takers and were able to point out when, where, and how they had chosen to take risks. If they chose not to do so, they had good, intellectual reasons for doing so, not the fear of failure, the fear of ridicule, or the fear of a low grade. This outcome was achieved. The final project, a children's book, fulfilled the outcome's intent as evidenced by the themes, content, and artwork of the books written and also by self-evaluations and peer reviews.

Outcome 2

When given brainstorming activities involving unusual uses or the clustering of ideas around a word or phrase, 35 out of 50 showed an increase in the number of items generated. They submitted evidence of ideas leading to other ideas and then branching off into others. This indicated that they had deferred judgment while engaged in brainstorming. They were able to prioritize the items by criteria they established. This outcome was partially achieved. It had been hoped that students would brainstorm without teacher prompting; this did not occur. Unless mandated, students tended to begin writing without any written evidence of brainstorming. They insisted they did

so silently; the writer would have preferred written proof of the process.

Outcome 3

Forty out of 50 students were able to rewrite a given theme, plot, or story in an original and unusual way. They were able to adapt it to their audience and developed unusual ways of delivering and reinforcing the project. This indicated their ability to experiment, to generate new strategies, and to have an increased belief in the value of their own ideas. This outcome was achieved. Self-evaluation via journals and logs, questionnaire responses, teacher observations throughout the year, and portfolio review by peers and teacher affirmed this conclusion.

Discussion

Outcome 1

This outcome was achieved inasmuch as students willingly persisted and expressed themselves differently. The writer was gratified when the rhymesters used free verse, those who usually wrote prose tried versifying, plays were written by short story writers, and artists willingly abandoned crayons and paint for pen and paper. Although no students was ever defiant, there were some who did assignments their own way. The writer regards these as successes, not as failures (as one might under normal classroom conditions). She feels this indicates the trust

the student placed in her and her judgment, but it also shows the student's risk-taking level rose. At the beginning of the practicum, 47 out of 50 students followed directions carefully, meticulously, and accurately. If they wanted to deviate, they asked permission. By the end of the practicum, only seven continued to check with the writer, asking, "Is this right? May I do this?" The rest interpreted the directions however they wished and took chances that it would be accepted. Two examples illustrate these points.

The first written assignment was students responding to one of five prompts. One topic, "The girl who swears," was avoided and later discussion revealed that the students were concerned about using curse words, even in quotes. They were reluctant to offend and wanted good grades. They chose safe topics and wrote well. They asked many questions. They were worried about spelling, about grammar, about length, about word choice. They wondered how the papers would be graded and if they could rewrite them for a higher grade. Once they learned that papers would not be graded, but that full credit would be given for all work done, these questions ended and they were able to concentrate on content. The writer had hoped quality would improve. This was not always the case. But discussion revealed that much depended upon the students' feelings and sense of inspiration that day, how much they liked the topic, what

else was happening in their lives. Then, too, some always did superb work because they could not personally bear to do otherwise. Some needed other incentives. But their willingness, after a few months, to not ask questions but to work on whatever level they were comfortable with that day indicated success of the risk-taking outcome.

A second example of low risk taking involved Beverly Coyle's visit. Although her short stories are cerebral and somewhat inaccessible to many students, they all struggled to understand and react to them. Being early in the year, their timidity was apparent in their skits and presentations. Few experimented with form, style, or language. The creative thank you's were quite predictable. The most heartrending was written as a business letter (only five were written this way). It stated, "When I was young I knew how to write . . . In middle school, teachers tried to 'mold' my writing . . . my peers have turned into a flock of blind sheep . . . I'm beginning to feel reborn in this class and you affirmed all this." When she read this to the class, she was vigorously applauded. Many students excitedly agreed with her assessment that their creative efforts had been discouraged. Ms. Coyle therefore served as an additional role model for my students, her life reflecting the joys and terrors of being different.

The creative speakers fulfilled the same function. Each student was responsible for having one perform and talk

to the class. Many spoke of the changes they had taken and why they did so. Since the students respected them and their accomplishments, this reinforced the idea that risk taking was commendable. Towards the end of the year, several students decided to be their own speakers, and the writer was amazed at this example of risk taking. They had come to realize that their creativity in fields other than writing was admirable and they were willing to showcase their talents. One student spent two days teaching the class how to make a book. Everyone then designed a cover, pasted, glued, and painted. No two were alike. Another student spoke about designing comic books and showed the class some he had done. One girl sings in her church and performed for her classmates. One boy baked cookies. There was quite a discussion on whether this was creative; by the end of class students agreed that if one experimented and tried new recipes, it was a creative pursuit. This was an unexpected reinforcement of risk taking and deferring judgment. A few students brought in their friends to speak to the class. It was a joy to see teens affirmed by their peers in this way. There is no question that the students' risk taking and definition of creativity had expanded during the year.

The photo story assignment, at the end of the third month, may have been a watershed. Students were asked to tell a story which had a beginning, a middle, and an end.

They could use only seven photographs and no words. Most complied. A few projects were so extraordinary, so unusual, and so daring that they became excellent models for creativity. One boy developed a scenario that included 85 photographs taken at the Broward Mall, in a hotel room, in traffic, and on the beach. He was a risk taker before he ever entered the classroom; from him students learned the true meaning of that term. The writer insisted that he edit the photographs. He did. His project had 25. Did he break the rules and take risks? Yes. He was commended for that. That surprised the class. A different group asked the assistant principal and the teacher to be part of the story, a brave act on their part. Two other students decided to make clay figures, attach these to construction paper, and tell a story with three dimensional figures rather than photographs. They too were commended for their innovativeness. The writer believes that slowly the class was learning the real meaning of creativity and experimentation. She also believes that too often students have been penalized when they have dared to be different and she thinks her success came because she had rewarded them, not punished them.

The writer became aware that students were becoming intrepid. They began asking how they could get published and if the writer would get them information about various contests.

Table 1 indicates that many more students entered competitions and contests this year than had last year.

Table 1

Number of Submissions to Contests, Competitions, and Magazines from Creative Writing Classes

Contest, Competition, or Magazine	No. of Submissions 1993-1994	No. of Submissions 1994-1995
From Worlds Apart (School Magazine)	50	200
Confetti (School Newsletter)	15	125
Martin Luther King Contest	0	25
Poetry Anthology	17	50
State Writing Contest	3	11
Scholastic Magazine	2	7
State English Teachers' Journal	14	28

As part of black history month, the county library held a contest in which students were asked to write or submit a visual on the quotation, "Children will be judged on the content of their character and not the color of their skin." The writer's students read King's "I have a dream" speech and were encouraged to enter the contest. They won three out of the four top honors - first and second place in poetry/prose and first place in visual. All three winners used a mode different from the one in which they usually

expressed themselves. The poster winner always preferred writing non-fiction prose, the second place poetry writer usually wrote short stories. The surprise was the first place winner who invariably used humor. He stated that "he wanted to be different this time and try something new." Not only was his piece serious, but it was in the form of a combination parable and concrete poem. Written as "I'm Free," it told the tale, symbolically, of a bird entrapped and then freed by a little boy. To the writer, these three examples indicate that her students were taking risks.

The county's short story contest had more entries by students this year than it had had in the past. The school winner was a girl who usually wrote poems. The writer feels that every time students enter contests they take enormous risks. Not winning can be painful and many prefer just not to enter. Many of those who did not enter the county contest read their stories to the class and opened themselves up to peer review. This is another example of increased risk taking.

The writer's state English teacher's association holds an annual competition and there are four categories for high school students. This year 11 of her students entered as compared to three students submitting pieces last year. One student won first place in two categories. This is especially gratifying because this young lady has usually written poetry, yet her winning entries were not her poems

but a personal narrative and an essay. Her journal entries indicate that class readings and comments bolstered her confidence, created an atmosphere in which she felt comfortable experimenting in other media, and enabled her to succeed. Obviously, not everyone can win and not everyone's work can be expected to achieve outstanding results in a short period of time. But creating an affirming and accepting atmosphere does make a difference.

The final project, children's books written for particular persons, best illustrates the risk-taking heights many students attained. They read the books to the entire class while randomly selected individuals evaluated them. No two books were alike in any way. The stories, the purpose, the illustrations, the covers, the colors, and the text expressed individuality and risk taking. Class discussion following each reading centered on asking why certain decisions were made, what risks had been involved, and what brainstorming had been done. Working alone or with a partner, 49 out of 50 felt they had taken chances, had considered many ideas before focusing on one, and were pleased with their accomplishments. One student dedicated her book to her fourth grader, "without whom there wouldn't be a book" wrote in rhyme (second and fourth sentences in each stanza) for the first time, explaining how the cows saved Christmas. She wrote "boom" as a pop-out, had semi-abstract illustrations, and used humorous personification

and onomatopoeia. A tall tale with a moral was beautifully illustrated by someone not in the class. Two girls told the story of Tim who lived in Kowloon and could not swim. Its title, "Another Fish on the Block," was a wonderful play on words, and the story and illustrations are in dominant colors. One story, about a boy who practiced and practiced, involved a graphic illustration of someone being hurt in the knee. A lively discussion ensued. It was interesting to note some students were concerned about protecting younger ones. They disliked what they perceived as a gory drawing. The authors of this story said they talked and thought about this a lot, but felt they wanted to be honest in their depiction. The writer commended their daring. "Tiny the Elephant" was an unusual book because there was a hole at the bottom of the animal's nose on every page. The book's author related that she had loved interactive books when a child, and so she made one with a hole for her buddy to stick a finger into.

Every book had at least one unusual quality and a hook which engaged the reader. Four in particular turned the reader's expectations upside down and inside out. One personified an ant and discussed its adventures in various human places. The ant's advice included, "When doing badly in school, wash your hair very often and study harder . . . When friends are mad at you, eat green peas and try to talk with them . . . When yo can't concentrate, go by yourself

and pick your toenails." The second book was in the shape and form of a sweater and every page had a pop-up of some sort. The third was written by a girl who told the class she brainstormed with her parents when she couldn't think of an original idea. The world in her book is a shoebox sailing down New York City streets. When the heroine got hungry, she ate "orange apple slices with spinach on steak." The greatest risk taker was a boy who told the class his father had said that no child could understand the book. Not only did the class agree with the father, but they weren't sure if they understood it. Reminiscent of Dr. Seuss's enigmatic stories and Lewis Carroll's nonsense rhymes, "Blobby's Trip" plays with words. "Tired of green, I traversed into a super intelligent shade of neon blue. . . Two polka dots of a wonderful shade of seven hummed their zippy paths." The accompanying pictures delight the eye and illustrate the text. The writer concluded that this person certainly was willing to take risks and to defer judgment. This final project succeeded.

Outcome 2

When given brainstorming activities involving unusual uses or the clustering of ideas around a word or phrase, 35 out of 50 would show an increase in the number of items generated. They would show evidence of ideas leading to their ideas and then branching off into others. This would indicate that they had deferred judgement while engaged in

brainstorming. They would then be able to prioritize the items by criteria they established.

Students were given three minutes to make a list of the various uses of a woven basket. At the beginning of the year, of 50 students writing, 25 thought of 5 ways, 15 thought of 6, 4 had 7 different uses, 3 had 9, and 3 could think of 10 different ways. Modifying one of Torrance and Myers' (1965) ideas, the writer then did an exercise with her class that she had seen demonstrated at an National Endowment for the Humanities institute in Breadloaf, VT (private communication, Barry Gross, July, 1992). She had the students get into a circle and each one show what could be done with a clothes hanger. The writer noted the many surprised looks as students used to hang for suicide, as an eating utensil, for fishing, as a weapon, and as a baby carrier. This generated a discussion on using objects in unusual ways and on combining two totally unconnected objects and finding a commonality or a use.

By the end of the year students increased the number of items on a list considerably (see Figure 1). Twenty-five could find 12 uses for a bottle, 10 had 16, 4 listed 18, and 11 could find 21 uses. In conjunction with the examples already cited, the writer believes that this outcome was achieved. She also realizes that it was the class atmosphere that most contributed to its success. Students

were not worried about being considered odd or silly or dumb. They reveled in being imaginative and fanciful.

Pre-and-Post-Implementation Comparison of Students' Responses to Brainstorming Activities
n= 50 students

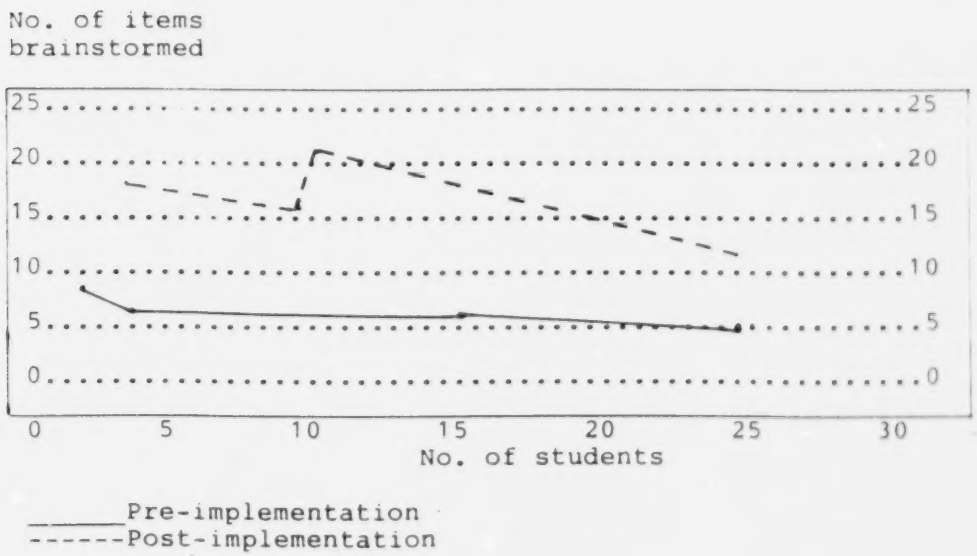

Figure 1

Both de Bono's (1986) thinking course and Rico's (1987) writing tape relied heavily on timed listing or clustering. The rationale, that doing so deferred judgment and generated more creative ideas, was then explained. Listing and clustering were vital components of the creative writing classes for the first 3 months.

The writer discovered that students were more motivated and successful when they worked alone than when they worked in groups for these activities. She wondered if it was because they took pride in their individual endeavors. They

certainly seemed to take the activities more seriously and were less apt to fool around or waste time. After they were finished working individually, they were happy to share with the class. Some groups worked well and shared with one another, generating even more discussion and more ideas. Other groups did not use their time as wisely, and occasionally groups needed to be reminded to be more accepting and less judgmental of others.

The writer kept a monthly chart listing numbers generated by the brainstorming activities. There was not a steady incline because too many other factors interfered. Some weeks other issues and concerns were more important and students were not as keen to generate lists. Sometimes students found fault with the topics. There were also moments of crisis. The population worked with, high school 10th to 12th graders, is quite volatile. Personal crises had several students sobbing inconsolably for the entire period; one student ran away from home; and, at times, the demands of the literary magazine and the weekly newsletter on some of the students in the class had to take precedence. However, comparing results of brainstorming in September with results in June, it is clear that many more ideas were generated by the end of the year than had been at the beginning of the year.

The writer also noted that many pieces, prose and poetry, that appeared both in the school's literary magazine

and in the weekly newsletter were revisions of vignettes written after clustering activities in class. She personally feels that these pieces tended to be more polished and deeper in context and meaning than most other pieces submitted for publication.

One in particular received many accolades when it was originally read to the class. The student reworked it and was very proud of her accomplishment. She had never before written a poem, nor had she ever written about so personal a subject. She happily submitted it for publication.

> I am the crimson blood my forefathers
> bled as they whittled away their years
> on slavemaster's land.
>
> I am the many tears they spilled from
> joy and pain bottled up inside forced
> nobodies.
>
> I am the sweat they shed scrubbing
> floors with raw fingers and picking
> cotton ignoring old wounds making room
> for new.
>
> I am the cry of the whip as it whistles
> through the air making contact with
> tender flesh and broken bones.
>
> I am the Negro they said could never,
> should never, read, just work hard and
> long to die soon and poor.

Although the class felt that listing and clustering helped them brainstorm and defer judgment, they occasionally complained when they had to do these activities. The writer believes this is in part because a mind at rest prefers to stay at rest. Students could not simply write whatever they

wished and pass it off as their best efforts. But she must agree with her students that a few of the activities could have been eliminated from Rico's tapes, which became a bit too predictable at the end. The writer had hoped students would always brainstorm before writing, without any prompting or inducement from the teacher to do so. This was not often the case. Many did not agree with the writer that their best quality work resulted from written brainstorming. Most insisted that they preferred brainstorming mentally, not using pencil and paper.

De Bono's (1986) course presented other problems. Although creative, it forced students to be logical, to support their ideas, and to analyze their thinking. They preferred not to. The writer found that cooperative groups, therefore, did not work well with de Bono's activities. She had her students generate lists individually, collected these, and then had them meet in groups to decide upon what ideas they would share with the class. She found the time constraints (3 minutes for brainstorming) very helpful. They helped keep the students focused and on task. Some students liked the open-ended questions; others were uncomfortable when questioned about the logic or consequences of their arguments. They believe that anything is acceptable. When the writer collected the brainstorming generated by de Bono, students seemed to take the activity

more seriously. It is difficult for them to be inner directed and focused.

There was one restriction the writer did impose: gratuitous, inappropriate sexual, scatological, or racial/religious material was totally unacceptable. The students understood that they could not offend anyone. They had more difficulty with distinguishing what was acceptable and what was unacceptable sexual material. Audience, voice, and purpose were discussed. The writer firmly believes that there have to be limitations to deferring judgment and these issues could too easily wound others. One student had a hard time with these restrictions, but by the end of the year had succeeded in writing about a very sensitive subject using appropriate language.

Outcome 3

Students would be given a theme, a plot, a story, and 40 out of 50 would be able to rewrite it in an original and unusual way. They were able to adapt it to their audience, and yet develop unusual ways of delivering and reinforcing the project. This would indicate their ability to take risks, to experiment, to generate new strategies, and to have an increased belief in the value of their own ideas.

One of the first activities involving this outcome required the students to teach a literary term to their peers. They could work alone or with a partner and a sign-up sheet assured their not replicating any terms. This

activity was thought to be successful by the students, but the writer was somewhat disappointed with the quality of the work. Even though she had checked on their plans, she only did so once, had them revise, and then let them present without checking the plans again. Because she tried to encourage their efforts, she was not as critical as she should have been of the first few presentations. Permitting a low standard from the beginning seemed to reinforce mediocrity. She has learned that she needs to be clearer in distinguishing between rough drafts and performance activities. Two major problems were that they did not use their own words in defining the terms and their activities were not very original or elucidating. This is one example of when not grading work can boomerang and result in poor products. There came to be a sameness in the presentations; and the teacher did address this issue once all the students had completed the work. She should have done so much earlier and not worried about hurting feelings. She had also been concerned that there had not been enough time for trust to develop within the group. Perhaps, then, this activity should have been postponed to later in the year.

The student who taught fairy tales tried very hard to be original. She read the takeoff on fairy tales which tells the story from a different perspective--the wolf's complaints of how all he wanted to do was borrow some soup. Asking students to write one from the perspective of another

character did not work that well. The group which taught parables played an instrument as part of its presentation. They gave out papers which had pictures of animals on them; students were then to write a parable for that animal. The resulting written work was mediocre. It is interesting to note that students did not brainstorm before they completed their tasks.

One group's presentation demonstrated mastery. They taught irony and performed two skits to illustrate it. One skit was a takeoff on the Nancy Kerrigan knee bashing attack; the other a little play about a school event. The leaders then gave out a worksheet with brief stories. Students had to decide whether or not these tales were ironic. The culminating activity was that the class formed groups and created their own tales involving irony. The presenters rated the groups on how well they seemed to understand irony; two groups failed and redid their skits. This activity was so successful that the two who originated it presented it to a ninth grade non-English speaking class. They felt very good when the students in that class reacted well to their lesson.

Many other class activities centered around this outcome. The most frequent and popular was one which enabled the students to form their own acting troupes and perform skits. Students enjoyed putting on costumes or disguises and writing their own scenarios to themes and

motifs found in their reading. The story of the prodigal son resulted in many skits in which a child disobeyed a parent and dire consequences followed. An original variation of this was a child disobeying a parent, swimming in a lake, and receiving a reprimand later. One skit revolved around a child being warned not to sit on cactus. Disobeying his parent's edict, he hurt himself. Several skits dealt with miscegenation and seemed to reflect students' conflicts with their own parents. Class discussions ensued. Despite the sensitivity of the topic, some students revealed how prejudiced their parents were. Being nonjudgmental in these circumstances was very difficult.

The writer decided to use mother's day as one of the culminating activities and yardsticks for this outcome. The holiday is responsible for so many cards filled with cliches; she thought it would be interesting to see what her students would do with it. While the class was brainstorming ideas, the writer was surprised when one student said, "We don't celebrate any holidays in my family." Another student had celebrated it the week before. Several wanted alternatives to the assignment; they were told they could send anyone a card about anything. Some cards were to family pets and to friends. Once they were assured that the cards did not have to be given to the parent, and therefore total freedom was possible, they

enjoyed themselves. Having just been taught pop-up art, almost half included some pop-up or pop-out design in their cards. This was innovative of them. More than half were witty. All started that they tried very hard to be original; not all succeeded, but that was not surprising. It was the effort that mattered, especially since the writer had not insisted upon this quality specifically in her instructions. One student made a snowflake (because she did not have any colored paper) and all her peers were impressed with her metaphor. Several wrote in their native languages, and they had not asked for permission to do so. Not only were they fulfilling this outcome, but they took a risk and fulfilled outcome 1. One student drew a picture of a boy watering a plant; inside the card he wrote, "Thanks for helping me grow!" Another crossed out the word father, wrote mother, and inside stated, "I'm a firm believer in recycling." He signed his name and in parentheses wrote, "your son."

The writer had hoped that the final would provide the best indicator of success of this outcome. Unfortunately, her school adopted a policy whereby students with high averages and few absences could waive final exams. Almost 40 of the students did so. But the results of other activities up to that point indicate that students had learned to address their audience, alter the material, and deliver their projects in unusual ways.

The attitudinal questionnaire distributed at the beginning and at the end of the practicum indicated important changes in the students' belief systems and in their deeds (see Appendix C). In September, students considered the arts as the only area in which they had been creative. By June, they recognized that many other activities incorporated creativity. The creative speakers they had heard had opened up their minds to new ideas and new occupations as well as multiple meanings of the term. A builder had shown them his creativity when planning an addition to a warehouse, the school choir's rendition of a song was choreographed and planned by a student and was different from the previous year's performance, and the Yearbook editor discussed themes and use of color in nontraditional ways. Thus, one is not surprised that they thought themselves more creative in June that they had in September since their definition of the term had broadened. One must also take this into account when noting how many more times they responded to having experimented, having had unusual ideas, having used paradox, and having combined unconnected ideas. The figures therefore indicate an increased self-awareness as well as increased creativity. The questionnaire also indicates that they valued this quality more and consciously incorporated it into their activities.

What was surprising was the change in their attitude towards open-ended discussions. At first many were uncomfortable with not being told the right answer and also felt that many topics (race, religion, prejudice, equal opportunity) were a waste of classroom time which should be devoted to facts, facts, and even more facts. By June of 1995, most recognized the worth of divergent thinking and open-ended questions. While maturation might be a factor in causing this change, the writer believes that validating creativity in the classroom was a valuable factor, too. Students laughed when she reported that when she was young, she knew everything; as she ages and learns, she realizes that she is not even sure of the questions.

One group wished to convince younger students of the need for literacy and for reading. They therefore retold the story of the Three Little Pigs to first graders (and they eventually presented it to several first-grade classes). They involved the first graders by having them repeat certain phrases when signalled to do so. Their costumes were minimal; props included twigs, a painting of a brick house, and a large book, How to Fool a Wolf. That was the message of their skit: because he could read, the third pig was able to defeat the wolf. A children's book was a take-off on the City Mouse and the Country Mouse. Using humans, it concluded with, "Between both worlds the two

girls have found ways to openly experience and try new things."

Another group told the tale of John the Baptist, using a balloon to represent John's head being presented to Salome. One day students told the story of Hansel and Gretel using puppets made of paper bags for characters. The house, made of lollipops, was eaten and enjoyed at the end. Jack and the Beanstalk used braided yarn to replicate the beanstalk and props to imitate the giant. Students realized that creativity involves aspects other than just writing.

Even those who maintained that creativity is an inborn, innate, unteachable trait came to recognize that it was possible to encourage, nurture, and develop it. In addition, all of the students reported finding themselves at sometime saying, "I decided to try to do this instead of the assignment given." Unfortunately, they also reported that most of their teachers were usually adverse and even hostile to such suggestions.

The greatest surprise of this practicum was the ferocity with which the students attacked the rubrics the writer had originally planned to use. Fortunately, she had told them about her guidelines early enough in the study that changes could be made. The writer had originally planned to use rubrics written by Torrance and Myers (1964). Her students' objections resulted in a student-teacher collaborative effort. Their objections included the

following points. One was that some of the criteria by which creativity was to be judged might be totally unrelated, irrelevant, or inappropriate to the task involved. Second, they believed that more important than a checklist of items was a holistic scoring which included appropriateness, tone, voice, attitude, and effectiveness. The last item, they believed, was missing from the essence of the rubrics the writer wished to use. Third, the students sensitively and aptly pointed out that a body of work, a compilation of various pieces and assignments, should determine success, not one particular work. Their problems, their stresses, often affect their performance on a particular day. Nor were they equally enamored with all the tasks and assignments; this affected their success. They also commented that the Likert scale, going from always to never, was meaningless. Much depended upon the piece itself. They did not like a yes or no answer either. They truly preferred to respond holistically, making comments and writing specific examples to support their views. The writer also prefers anecdotal rather than numerical evaluations to essays, despite the difficulty in compiling the results.

Wiggins (1992) has maintained that students should know in advance what is expected. Following this advice in content courses made it possible for the writer to be flexible enough to adhere to those guidelines in her

creative writing class. She believes that student input validates the results. For one, the criteria are more meaningful and appropriate because they evolved from genuine student concerns. Second, an important factor in growth and development in education is knowing exactly what needs to be done. Creativity should not be a dark secret and students not privy to it. They recognize what is original and have the right to be told by what criteria or standards they will be evaluated. Third, their honing of evaluation skills helps them develop competence and mastery in those areas. The writer has found this to be true in her English classes and with herself. Student journals concurred that this happened to the students involved in this practicum.

Another totally unexpected outcome was the variety and cleverness of the suggestions made by the students regarding the literary magazine. It was from the class that the idea of a pizza party evolved. Students suggested asking bands whose members attended the school to play. Other students thought of having paper products donated to the literary magazine. The entire activity was a microcosm of brainstorming, of one idea leading to another. It was concrete evidence of the effectiveness of the process and the success of the practicum, although it was not originally planned to be either an outcome or a measurement thereof.

The writer had always intended to have journals and written pieces help measure the outcomes of risk taking and

deferring judgment. These were to supplement planned activities and the rubrics she planned to use. However, circumstances made it necessary for this to be the only way of evaluating certain students. One of the writer's responsibilities is to produce a school literary magazine, and the creative writing class is the springboard for the fundraising, publicity, and judging involved. The writer modeled risk taking by beginning the year with a board of seven editors, hoping that duties could be more equitably distributed. She also planned to have the editors involved in the various activities which were designed to encourage risk taking and deferring judgement. Herein came her third unexpected outcome.

For a variety of personal reasons, three editors resigned and dropped the class and one chose to leave high school to get a GED diploma. This necessitated major changes, since there was now an editorial board of three. The editors continued to participate in de Bono and Rico activities, but their responsibilities to the magazine made it impossible for them to engage in all of the assigned writing activities. Other means of assessing the editors became necessary, especially as the deadline for the literary magazine approached.

Teacher observation and judgement were the instruments the writer chose. One editor exhibited enormous risk-taking skills by teaching herself Pagemaker and, without any prior

experience, designing and laying out the entire magazine. She experimented daily, deferring judgment and printing out many possibilities for two-page spreads. She played around with font style and size, with pictures, with photographs, and with illustrations. At the end she made three daring decisions. One, she decided to go with a little color, even though it was costly, because she thought it enhanced the magazine. Second, a student had spoken to her about taking a photograph, cutting it up in different ways, and using the distorted image for a story. When the student-photographer failed to deliver the images he promised, the editor did it herself with her brother's picture. Third, unhappy with the cover and with only three days to deadline, she diplomatically prevailed upon another artist to draw what she had in mind and negotiated having the original artist design the cover page. The writer believes these are extraordinary feats of courage, of daring, and of deferring judgment. She believes that because of her role modeling and because of the atmosphere and goals of the class, this editor succeeded.

The second editor is a shy, reserved person who rarely spoke out in class. Somehow her responsibilities became leading the weekly meetings when pieces were read anonymously and decisions regarding their fate were made. She comported herself beautifully. Flustered within, she managed to lead the group effectively. She was brave.

The third editor undertook other responsibilities, also by default and without prior training. She became the art editor, selecting what would be included. She solicited work from students and from teachers, no mean feat. It was she who became the chief fundraiser. Commissioning a fellow student to design a logo, she had it printed on T-shirts which she sold. She also commissioned artists to design logos and programs for the pizza party. In conjunction with the writer, she was chief cheerleader.

All three editors agreed that they wanted the magazine to garner awards and be recognized. The writer, after attending a national journalism conference, shared what she had learned with them. She gave them the option of following experts' advice or using their own judgment. They made several decisions which are diametrically opposite that of conventional wisdom. They used different fonts on the center two-page spread because these reflected the theme better. They preferred having no movie review or play to including ones they considered mediocre. Two poems were published anonymously, even though this is frowned upon. The writer is thrilled with her editors' audacity and accomplishments. Sizer (1984) speaks of student as worker, and the Bible reminds us that we are known by our deeds. It is certainly true that by these standards the three editors exemplified the success of risk taking and deferring judgment. They had not been initially included in the

practicum, but because of their involvement with the class, their experiences need to be noted.

One other student took unexpected risks and made enormous strides throughout the year. As artistic editor of the school's newsletter, he conceived and executed an excellent plan: seek volunteers to help design and create art for the weekly newsletter. Using, but not limiting his search to the writer's classes, he succeeded in forming a reliable group upon whom he depended. At the end of the year, he gave each an issue to design completely. One expressed his thoughts (and hopefully those of many) by writing, "thanks for being understanding and for letting me make my statement here." Again, risk taking had been noted and applauded.

Because of the editors, the weekly newsletter sometimes became a lively forum for debate on the efficacy of school, the value of certain books, and the meaning and purpose of poetry. Students from the writer's class risked ridicule and/or disapproval for their unpopular views. One debunked The Bridges of Madison County; another questioned school and teachers. One student conceived of a "Dear Wendell" column, a humorous takeoff on "Dear Abby." Not everyone understood or appreciated the humor. The editors persevered in continuing it on an occasional basis. These unexpected outcomes were welcomed.

A fourth unanticipated but serendipitous occurrence was the scheduling of the classes which made it impossible to do the same activities with both and, therefore, enabled the writer to make some comparisons. Aside from differences in students, which was random, certain activities had to be revised with the class which met at the end of the day. That class did not have any literary staff members in it, so its involvement with the school magazine was minimal. However, the three newsletter editors were members of the class. They therefore were more successful in having pieces of writing emanate from these students. Certain students missed class about once a week because of extra-curricular activities. The writer had to carefully plan her lessons around their schedules so they would not miss any of the teaching involved with the practicum. This was also the class which conducted bake sales for the literary magazine.

The greatest difference between the two groups involved the children's books. The adjoining elementary schools were dismissed before the last class met; therefore, the students could not visit or meet one another. The children's books were written to a more anonymous audience. The older students wrote letters to the younger ones, explaining the project and asking questions. The letters were randomly distributed to fourth graders who responded by writing a bit about themselves and their interests. This is in contrast to the writer's other class which visited a non-English

speaking kindergarten class six times and developed a relationship and rapport with the students.

Several differences in the quality and content of the children's books resulted. For one, writing for an older audience necessitated more sophisticated books and the students rose to that requirement. Those writing for non-English speaking students tended to be very simplistic in both language and plot. The more important distinction between the two groups was that although both wanted to please their audiences and have their books admired, more emphasis on this was placed in the class that would actually meet their charges face to face. Knowing that they would be able to see immediately whether or not the book was "liked" seemed to put some constraints on them. The writer sensed this limitation, and the students' journals confirmed this suspicion. Almost all of them confessed to being nervous about how the younger ones would react to their books.

A county newspaper wrote an article on the class trips to the elementary school, recognizing it as a mentorship program that "forged an educational partnership" (Talalay, 1995, p. D1) between high school students and non-English speaking kindergarten children. The older ones were quoted saying that they tried very hard to "come up with something cute and educational and different." The reporter's interviews, as well as the students' evaluation, confirm its success. Some found the assignment difficult, but fun. The

writer thinks it important that they enjoyed themselves while they learned. They felt they had used all the skills stressed in class. Some were even reluctant to give up their books and made color copies for their buddies. Many believed that working with a person not only improved the quality of the work and provided them with opportunities to explore many avenues. Most would have preferred spending more time on this project.

Another unexpected outcome must be noted. Students wholeheartedly endorsed the creative speakers project. All but three felt that the time had been well spent. The writer was surprised at their enthusiasm with one another's accomplishments. Having expected them to bring in adult speakers, she was initially dismayed when so many chose to bring in peers. Students' reactions and comments assuaged her doubts and misgivings. "I had no idea my friends were so talented" and "an entire new world of hobbies and interests was opened up to me" were typical reactions. Those who were their own speakers found it to be an incredibly moving experience and were exultant over the respect and admiration heaped upon them by their classmates. One wrote, "My hobby is usually thought to be trivial and I was thrilled that kids in the class looked up to it and to me."

The practicum itself worked very well, but measuring and evaluating creativity was quite complicated and time

consuming. Although the writer's outcomes were achieved, she has some reservations about her conclusions. For one, she is aware that her students very much wanted to please her and that her body language, tone, and comments enabled them to realize when she was pleased and when she was not. She would very much like to follow up her study in a few years and find out if they were still being creative, either personally or professionally.

She also feels that the class atmosphere, one of acceptance and praise that had been carefully developed and nurtured all year, was the single most important factor in enabling creativity to flourish. Students spontaneously applauded one another's efforts. They would excitedly enter the room and say, "You must hear this piece. I read it last hour and it's great." The author would beam, and usually the class felt the same way as had the first reader.

One of the writer's colleagues used a special "author's chair" in which the person reading an original piece sat. Lacking that, the writer gave her students her armchair in which to sit when they read their works. This made them feel important and validated their work and its worth. They knew the writer was pleased when they took risks, and therefore they did so. One very religious girl sat in the chair and read her poem, "Lust burns from deep within / I'm patiently waiting for this forbidden sin / Inexperienced we are, but desire keeps us going on and on / To feel the

patiently waiting for this forbidden sin / Inexperienced we are, but desire keeps us going on and on / To feel the wetness of nature begin / Tears stream ..." and, looking pleased, asked us what it meant. The class did not have a clue. "Going swimming," she proclaimed proudly. Ambiguity and double entendre had not been her forte at the beginning of the year. With encouragement and approbation, this girl blossomed.

As previously mentioned, commendation and praise do have possible drawbacks. In addition, some educators might be offended at the idea of students being treated as Pavlovian subjects. Reinforcement with reward and praise can produce wonders, and one can only hope they are permanent. The writer definitely prefers commendation to condemnation.

Recommendations

The writer's first recommendation is to use de Bono's (1986) creativity course differently. She does not regret having followed instructions implicitly. It is like using a recipe, one needs to follow it and see the result before one experiments and improvises. However, she feels a few lessons should be taught very briefly and succinctly. Others, which include "random output, define the problem, combination, and remove faults" should be repeated and reinforced during the year. The same is true of the Rico Tape. There were times when the tape was ineffective and words more meaningful to the students should have been used.

She also needs to train her students to become better listeners.

Second, she is concerned that she sacrificed content too often this year. Next time she will introduce a double rubric, one for originality and one for mastery of basic literary techniques. Although students may disagree on quality, she has the right to demand that they utilize specific rhetorical devices at times. She thinks this approach, when used, needs to be made clear at the beginning of an assignment. Then pieces which fail to do so will require revision.

Not grading creative work led, at times, to sloppy and slipshod results. In a more prefect world, a pass/fail would be a possible alternative. With students who are in high school because they must be there, the disadvantages of not grading were many. The writer needs to revisit this issue. Students do aim for better quality when work is graded; they admit this. They also are better risk takers when work is not graded. When attempting a new skill, under optimum conditions, there should be no other pressures. Students should feel free to experiment. The instructor needs to clarify when they are expected to be innovative and daring and when they need to exhibit mastery and be accountable. Certainly not everything should be graded, but some classwork, as well as projects, should be assessed to assure greater effort. The children's books had a built-in

guarantee. The students wanted them to be liked by their buddies.

Fourth, the writer believes that students need to be involved in the rubric writing from the very beginning. Their input is essential and their recommendations and reactions helpful. They deserve to know what criteria will be used to evaluate them. They also have excellent ideas which need to be incorporated. Since each class is different, and the assignments vary, it might be a good idea to have a generic rubric and modify it, if and when necessary, according to the specifications of each assignment. Students might be comfortable numerically scoring one kind of assignment, using anecdotal material for a different kind of work. Then pass/fail might be a perfect alternative to any piece that is risky. This would be established at the outset. Students might individually decide what type of evaluation they desire. There could be limits as to how many are pass/fail.

Dissemination

The writer plans to attend several national conferences this year, two for English teachers and one for journalism teachers. She will submit applications to conduct workshops on creativity. In addition, she will look into the possibility of leading workshops on this topic at local, state, and national writing and reading conferences.

She will also submit greatly modified portions of this study to various publications. As a creative writing teacher, she is aware of the need to share ideas and findings with others. State and national journals are excellent vehicles for doing so.

As a member of her school's curriculum committee, she will lobby for further inclusion of creative thinking skills in various classes and disciplines. It is unfortunate that schools are being regarded as training places for work rather than as learning centers for thinkers. She will actively campaign for change.

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APPENDIX A

ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

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1. How many times in the past year have you asked for permission to change an assignment or do it in a different way?

2. How often in the past year have you experimented in writing with:

   form

   style

   language

3. How often in the past year have you used paradoxes and oxymorons?

4. How often in the past year have you combined unconnected ideas?

5. List fields in which creativity is used/needed.

6. What have you done that you consider to be creative?

7. What do you think when you hear an idea that is unusual?

8. Discuss ways in which you have been able to use unique, unusual ideas.

9. Discuss your thoughts and feelings when given open-ended questions.

APPENDIX B

RUBRIC FOR TEACHING LITERARY TERMS

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Accuracy of definition	Yes	No
Audible presentation	Yes	No
Use of skit or other performance technique	Yes	No
Props - costumes - if and when appropriate	Yes	No
Practice worksheet or other such activity	Yes	No
Activity to check if students learned term	Yes	No
Entertaining/interesting presentation	Yes	No
Bonus - explain why	Yes	No

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

CLASS PROFILE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE
SEPTEMBER 1994/JUNE 1995

APPENDIX C

STUDENTS' PRE-IMPLEMENTATION ATTITUDINAL SURVEY RESPONSES
n= 50 students

Question: # of risks taken:	30	25	20	15	10	5	0
Permission to change assignment	2	0	0	8	3	18	19
Experimented with form	4	1	2	11	7	10	15
style	3	0	0	16	4	12	15
language	10	0	0	0	7	18	15
Used paradox	2	0	0	0	12	10	26
Combined unconnected ideas	1	3	4	0	0	18	24

STUDENTS' POST-IMPLEMENTATION ATTITUDINAL SURVEY RESPONSES
n= 50 students

Question: # of risks taken:	30	25	20	15	10	5	0
Permission to change assignment	7	1	0	22	12	6	2
Experimented with form	8	20	6	5	3	8	0
style	6	18	3	12	8	3	0
language	7	22	8	2	6	5	0
Used paradox	6	8	3	18	8	7	0
Combined unconnected ideas	9	24	8	4	1	4	0